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AUTHOR	Theobald, Paul
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ABSTRACT

This book overviews the history of one-room schools in the United States during the 19th century and early 20th century in the midwestern states of Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The book is based on rural school records, correspondence of early school officers, contemporary texts, and diaries and letters of rural students and teachers. An apparent theme of rural education history in the Midwest was the pervasive resistance of rural communities to state-sponsored schooling and initiatives of centralized state departments of education. The first chapter, "The Kingdom of God in the Wilderness: Education and Religion in the Antebellum Midwest," focuses on the relationship between educational preferences and religion. Specifically, this chapter examines effects on the inter-Protestant competition and expansion in midwestern states during the 19th century that resulted in both pro- and anti-common school sentiment. The second chapter, "Transience and Free Schooling in the States of the Midwest," examines the economics of a highly mobile society and its effect on the educational experiences of children in the Midwest. The third chapter, "Community Gatekeepers: The School Board Men of the Rural Midwest," examines the role of school board members who controlled the affairs of local districts. Although each school board handled matters differently, there were clear trends such as barring women and nonlandowners from having a voice in school affairs. The fourth chapter, "Recess, Recitation, and the Switch: Students and Teachers in Midwest Country Schools," relates one-room schooling experiences through teachers' and students' eyes and demonstrates how rural school pedagogy meshed well with Puritan and Lockean philosophies prevalent during this time. The last chapter, "Rural Meets Urban: Country Schools, State Departments of Education, and the Country Life Commission," explores the relationship between local districts, intermediate school

authorities, and state departments of education. Specifically, this chapter focuses on the experiences of rural schools during the Progressive Era when concern for the American countryside was at its peak. The reform movement of President Roosevelt's Country Life Commission lost its momentum by 1918, and it was at this point that rural schools began a rapid decline. Contains over 200 references, notes, and an index. (Author/LP)

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